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THE WOMAN
AND
THE FIDDLER

NORREVANG - SANDBY

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THE WOMAN AND THE FIDDLER

THE WOMAN

AND

THE FIDDLER

A Play

IN THREE ACTS

By ARNE NORREVANG

Translated from the Norwegian

BY

MRS. HERMAN SANDBY

PHILADELPHIA
BROWN BROTHERS
1911

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Introductory Note

The music which accompanies the drama is based on the "slåtters," or dances originated by the fiddlers of Norway, who went about from valley to valley, playing at various kinds of festivities. The instrument they used is called the "Hardanger fiddle," a crude violin having eight strings. Edvard Grieg has said of the tunes that have been collected and written down for us: "They are a blending of soft, fine gracefulness and sturdy, almost uncouth power. They are daring in their imaginative flight, and peculiarly bizarre and original, both as to melody and rhythm." Of the fiddlers themselves many legends have come down to us in regard to their mysterious power to fiddle people out of their senses or to cause their absolute disappearance.

On midsummer night the Norwegians still perform the old rites symbolic of joy and triumph. Bonfires are made on the tops of hills and mountains, and tarred barrels set ablaze to float down the fjords. Romantic beliefs asserting the charm of trees and flowers are still in vogue among the peasants.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Audis Reen.
Rebecca Reen, her mother.
Eyolf and Trygve, in love with Audis.
Thorild, a fiddler.
Pastor Kolb, the village pastor.
Ravna, a forlorn woman.
A Stranger.
Ole, a lonely old peasant.
Hulda, a fortune-teller.
Two hunters, a shepherd and a shepherdess, and other peasants.

The action takes place in Norway in the middle of the last century.

ACT I

THE WOMAN AND THE FIDDLER

ACT I.

Place: A mounlain valley in the northern part of Norway.

Time: Midsummer night.

Scene: To the right, the gable of Ole's hut, with an open door. In the center, an elder tree and under it a bench. In the background, woods and mountains. Several footpaths lead from different directions to the elder tree. A shepherd's tune is heard faintly, then coming nearer. The shepherd and shepherdess appear and seat themselves under the elder tree.

SHEPHERDESS.

There is a mystery about this tree, for many loves have had their destiny made known beneath its crown. And here we've stood and heard the cuckoo call that brought us joy! And here we've sat and seen the fairy king with all his retinue! And in that little patch of green we've seen the fairies dance! (*The cuckoo is*

heard to call, "cuckoo—cuckoo—cuckoo." The lovers listen attentively.)

BOTH.

Three times he called!

SHEPHERDESS.

Three years is long to wait.

SHEPHERD.

(*Kissing her three times.*)

Meanwhile 'tis good to love! (*They go arm in arm, and their song grows fainter. As they disappear, the melody changes and is heard to come from the mountains. Audis Reen appears. She is dressed in a soft, white gown, open at the neck, and has a thin, white scarf thrown over her shoulders. Ravna, a woman of dark mien and wretched appearance, follows her at a distance. Audis looks carefully about, then goes under the elder tree.*)

AUDIS.

(*To herself.*)

How often has this grand old tree felt its roots and fibres vibrate with the blissful tremors of lovers' wishes that ran from its foundation to the very top

of its benignant crown! 'Tis said that if by chance the cuckoo calls, one's wish comes true. Ah, if that silly bird would call for me, I know how I would frame my heart's desire! I had a dream! I dreamt that I was on the mountains with them both. Then did we come to a place where there grew yellow violets that are a symbol of happiness. And we plucked them all! Evolf gave me his and Trygve his, until my hands were full! Then I threw them down in despair and cried, "I love you both!" And suddenly we seemed to be transformed, and a lovely music streamed through us! And we were lifted over the mountains into the clouds! And I awoke! (*Audis stands as if dreaming. The cuckoo calls repeatedly.*)

AUDIS.

(*Her hands on her heart.*)

If it should come to pass that they confessed their love and bid me choose? If there should be a joy that compensates for all? There is a need of sacrifice; there is no other road to peace. I will not fear, but go up there and tell them of my dream. (*Audis hastens to go toward the mountains. As she disappears from sight, Ravna comes forth. She is older and wasted with sorrow. She watches Audis disdainfully.*)

RAVNA.

(*To herself.*)

Love gnaws at the heart till it has its way. Poor child, she had better wish herself in the black grave.

(Ravna sits under the elder tree and sings in a mournful way.)

They called it sin, the sin of a day,
  Sin bowed me down;
Evil eyes I met, evil eyes were they,
  That felled me to the ground.

They called it sin, the sin of love.
  The worm in the dust has peace;
They covered me with a heap of dung,
  And taunts that never cease.

I'm not worth while. All men jeer at me; all want to get the best of me. Yet when he plays, I feel a strange hope, a longing—— (*The cuckoo calls. Ravna is suddenly transformed.*) The cuckoo called and I have wished. And if her dreams come true, why should not mine? I'll go up there and test the charm!

(Ravna takes the path to the mountains and disappears. The tune from the mountain comes nearer and changes into a dance. The peasants in national costume come from the woods and gather in a ring dance under the elder tree. As the music increases, the dance grows wilder. Hulda, an old woman with an ill-shaped body and a peculiarly wrinkled face, suddenly appears, trying to stop the dance.)

HULDA.

How dare you dance to his fiddle strings?

A Young Girl.

No one can play as Thorild does.

A Young Man.

He plays the girls straight into our arms!

An Old Man.

The young will dance as long as there is heat in the blood.

An Old Woman.

His music has a strange power——

Hulda.

(*Shrieking.*)

Cursed be they who follow them! (*The young folks stop dancing, as though frightened by her threat.*)

Several.

Not I——not I——?

Hulda.

Remember Rudolf Reen! A year ago this night——

ALL.

Poor Rudolf Reen!

HULDA.

Remember Kirstine, who died with his name on her lips, and Gerd, who can't bear to hear the tune of his fiddle. (*The music stops suddenly.*)

SEVERAL.

He's stolen a hen from me.
And a cock from me.
He's played my little lamb away.
He's drawn my bull into the mountains.
Do you know who robs the graves at night?

OLE.

(*An old white-haired peasant who's been standing in the doorway.*)

He's played the sweet joy into my life!

HULDA.

(*To Ole.*)

He's played you out of your senses!

SEVERAL.

(*Pointing to the fiddler, who is seen approaching, followed by two hunters and a crowd of pursuers. The fiddler is hunchbacked, and has a small sack containing his fiddle strung over his shoulder. He has large, soulful eyes and a strong, spiritual countenance.*)

There he is! The fiddler! The fiddler!

(*The fiddler runs into Ole's house. Ole shuts the door after him. The hunters knock Ole down and enter. Confusion among the onlookers.*)

HULDA.

He should be tarred and feathered, or made to dance like a bear on hot irons!

(*After a few moments, the hunters come out.*)

FIRST HUNTER.

We can't find him; he's made himself invisible!

SECOND HUNTER.

He's not inside this house, unless he's crept into a hazel nut!

HULDA.

Did you look in the big chest?

FIRST HUNTER.

(*Adjusting something bulky within his blouse.*)

He wasn't there!

HULDA.

(*To the hunters.*)

You good-for-nothings! Can't you find an old hunchback? I'll go and fetch him myself.

SEVERAL.

Use your stick, Hulda! (*Hulda goes into the house cheered by the crowd. Ole tries to stop her, but falls about on the doorstep as though overcome.*)

SEVERAL.

She's got a grudge against him. She'll not catch him; he's like an eel, so quick to slip away.

HULDA.

(*Out.*)

He must have crawled out of the chimney!

SEVERAL.

(*Looking about.*)

Perhaps he's sitting on the roof as black as a crow.
He didn't go this way nor that!

A YOUNG GIRL.

Just listen, he is playing on the mountain!

ALL.

(*Listening with astonishment.*)

He is playing on the mountain!

THE HUNTERS.

Off to the mountains! The Pastor shall give us a nice shilling when we deliver that scamp to justice.

HULDA.

(*To the hunters as they go.*)

Take care he does not play you to perdition!

(*The hunters laugh and disappear singing a merry tune.*)

SEVERAL.

(*Looking after the hunters.*)

Perchance, they will never return! 'Tis good they've their rifles.

HULDA.

Hush! Someone is coming! It's a stranger!

(*The Stranger comes in sight. He is dressed in black and has a ghastly appearance.*)

SEVERAL.

He looks like a ghost!

(*The peasants scatter and disappear. Hulda alone remains.*)

HULDA.

(*To the Stranger.*)

Who are you? Where do you come from?

THE STRANGER.

(*In a peculiarly hollow voice.*)

I come from the graveyard. (*Hulda turns away from him.*)

THE STRANGER.

(*To himself.*)

Ravna was not among them. If it be true that he has played her unto himself?

HULDA.

Is it the fiddler you are after?

THE STRANGER.

(*Looking up to the mountains.*)

For whom does he play up there?

HULDA.

He plays to lure them up into the mountains. He tempts them to the edge of a precipice. When they fall into the abyss, he robs their dead bodies. Each year he craves a victim!

THE STRANGER.

I will see for myself.

HULDA.

If you go up there and listen to his music, you will never return.

THE STRANGER.

(Catching sight of Ole, who has succumbed on the doorstep.)

What ails that man?

HULDA.

Ole?——Ole?—— The fiddler's played him into a trance.

THE STRANGER.

(Feeling of Ole.)

He's dead!

HULDA.

Dead——is he dead? How do you know——?

THE STRANGER.

'Tis strange——very strange—— I will find him this very night, and know the secret of his power. *(The stranger goes to the mountains.)*

HULDA.

(Viewing the Stranger as he goes.)

Ugh——ugh—— He is more than a grave-digger! This time the fiddler will not escape! I shall have my

revenge! (*Hulda drags Ole into the house. A light mist begins to settle in the valley and gradually all is lost to sight. The scene changes and the mountain peaks are seen to stand forth in gorgeous colors. The music has changed into a rhapsody. Audis Reen, exalted and radiant, is seen climbing the highest peak, as one drawn by an irresistible power. A few steps beyond one sees Eyolf, who stands awaiting her. He is dressed in knee breeches and a soft blouse open at the neck, and has a cape flung over his shoulders. He has light, curly hair and a sensitive face.*)

EYOLF.

(*To himself.*)

Never before have I seen her as radiant as to-night. She looks as one blessed. She comes straight to me as though she were seeking me.

AUDIS.

(*Catching sight of Eyolf and waving her scarf to him.*)

Eyolf——you are here before me!

EYOLF.

(*Reaching out to her.*)

I have waited your coming.

AUDIS.

Where is Trygve?

EYOLF.

I know not. Why do you ask for him? I have found that lovely spot where we were last, when you promised to answer me. (*He takes her hand as if to lead her.*)

AUDIS.

(*Drawing back.*)

Since then I've built new mansions.

EYOLF.

Has anything happened? You look so strange!

AUDIS.

I had a dream! (*She seats herself on a projecting rock near a thicket. Eyolf seats himself at her feet and looks up into her eyes.*) It was so beautiful that I could not wake from it. I am not awake yet; it seems so real.

EYOLF.

If two should have the same dream at the same time, who could prove to them that it was not real? You must find that other who can share your dream.

AUDIS.

I can never find that other; for one alone can not give me all I desire. (*Eylof starts. Audis answers his look.*) You ask me what I desire? I want a kind of happiness——!

EYOLF.

A kind of happiness?

AUDIS.

I have wished for one moment to be so happy that it should compensate for all——

EYOLF.

To be so happy for one moment? Do you know what kind of happiness that is? (*Touching her shoulder and looking into her eyes.*) Do you know what is going to happen?

AUDIS.

(*Rising.*)

I have stood under the elder tree and heard the cuckoo call. And I know——I have wished it and willed it.

EYOLF.

You know! (*She meets his burning glance and looks down.*) You are like a young tree in the woods, bend-

ing beneath your own strength and grandeur. Your hair is like the wind, and over you hover dreams that awaken my longings! You seem like a vision!

AUDIS.

(*Shrinking away from him.*)

You see me as you desire; I am not so.

EYOLF.

(*Taking her hands.*)

Is it not for me that you are garbed in beauty, mild and trembling, as the strange light of this midsummer night?

AUDIS.

I do not know how I seem to you; I only know that we cannot go in blindness any more. We must awaken. Have you not thought of that, Eyolf?

EYOLF.

(*Distressfully.*)

I have thought till I can think no more. We are beyond thought. We have had the same dream; it is no use trying to awaken.

AUDIS.

(Closing her eyes as though a beautiful feeling ran through her.)

How beautiful it is!

EYOLF.

(Bending toward her.)

How beautiful it will be! *(Audis starts as a large bird flaps its wings over her head.)*

AUDIS.

(Looking up.)

What was it that touched me?

EYOLF.

It was a big, black bird that spread its wings in flight.

AUDIS.

(With a tremor.)

It is already out of sight?

EYOLF.

(*Grasping her hands.*)

It would take you along. There comes a time in our life when we dare not wait longer. We must take the wild flight together.

AUDIS.

(*Anxiously.*)

Where is Trygve? Answer me, Eyolf.

EYOLF.

When he comes, it will be soon enough!

AUDIS.

He cannot come too soon! (*She starts to go.*)

EYOLF.

(*Deterring her.*)

Do not go! Stay in this leafy bower! No one can hear us; no one can see us. I will give you the joy that compensates for all.

AUDIS.

(*Looking up as she hears the rustling of branches.*)

It is Trygve! He has come! Don't you hear him? (*Trygve is seen on the other side of the thicket.*)

EYOLF.

(*Pleading.*)

Before Trygve came——?

AUDIS.

(*With increasing intensity.*)

Was it not you who sang his praises and made me long to love him? You knew beforehand that he and I——

EYOLF.

How did I dare to do it?

AUDIS.

You gave me the courage to love in a deeper, truer, freer way than anyone has ever loved before.

EYOLF.

(*Despairingly.*)

Audis, what say you?

AUDIS.

(*Undismayed.*)

You said we should love as much and as many as it be our gift, for love is a gift.

EYOLF.

A pretty thought indeed!

AUDIS.

That day you seemed so great in my eyes; all things were changed.

EYOLF.

Then I was greater than I knew.

AUDIS.

We are all greater than we ourselves know; greater than we want to be. Our thoughts shame our feelings. It is no use trying to disown the gifts of our hearts. Come, Eyolf, it must be as it was in my dream. You

will come? (*Audis goes to meet Trygve. Eyolf looks after her, bewildered.*)

EYOLF.

(*To himself.*)

She goes to him as though he had the first right. But I will call her back to me. I will build a fire, love's fire, and demand a sacrifice! The leaping flames shall cast a spell about her! I will woo her with enchantment and the all-consuming fire! My love shall triumph as the flame triumphs over all it touches! Mountains and woods, it shall be your work! Light, bewitching summer night, it shall be thy will! Great midnight sun, it shall be the crowning act of thy glory!

(*Eyolf gathers fuel from the thicket and builds a fire on the projecting rock. A little way, beyond and above, separated from Eyolf by a bunch of trees, Trygve and Audis meet. He is dark and has strongly marked features. His manner is energetic and abrupt. He is dressed as a sportsman.*)

AUDIS.

(*To Trygve.*)

We have found each other at the right moment, Trygve. It is midnight and the sun of night grows red, while mortals dream.

TRYGVE.

Tell me what you have dreamt about, these long, light summer nights.

AUDIS.

(*Pointing to the horizon.*)

When I have stood here and seen the crimson streak of night fade into a light as of dawn, and the light of dawn has tempted me to wait for the new day, day on the other side of the mountain——

TRYGVE.

Then the visions have come to you?

AUDIS.

(*With increasing exaltation.*)

I have seen the mountains transform themselves into mist and float away. I have seen the heavens open!

TRYGVE.

Almost like a revelation——?

AUDIS.

A revelation of what we would be, if our dreams came true.

TRYGVE.

This is the time for revelations——?

AUDIS.

This is the night of joy! See the bonfires on hills and mountains! They are a symbol of light and life over darkness and death. All Norway is making merry. Trolls and witches are being burned; evil powers distanced and kept in abeyance. This is the hour of fulfillment!

TRYGVE.

You are filled with joy!

AUDIS.

(*As though enchanted, hearing the music of the mountains.*)

I hear the music! With trip-hammers it beats into my dream, with soft taps it plays upon my heart. It is a mournful strain with maddening leaps and springs. It makes me wild with mingled joy and pain. It is the music of my dream!

TRYGVE.

As though you were under a spell?

AUDIS.

Eyolf, Eyolf, why are you not here?

TRYGVE.

Is it he you are waiting for?

AUDIS.

(*Pointing to the fire which Eyolf has made.*)

See how those flames leap high; so leaps the joy in my heart!

TRYGVE.

It is the fire you long to touch.

EYOLF.

(*Calls exultantly.*)

All the fires are going out! See, everywhere in the valley they are being extinguished. Only mine, which is built on the highest peak, is still burning! What sacrifice shall we make, what sacrifice?

(*Eyolf is seen approaching the others.*)

AUDIS.

(*Who stands as though enthralled by the sight of the flames.*)

The smoke is rising to heaven! And with it the burden of a joyous sacrifice!

TRYGVE.

(*Suddenly stricken with fear.*)

The mist has gathered in the valley. It is creeping up the mountains. We have gone too far; these rocks are not safe. (*Clouds of mist are seen rolling up the mountains.*)

EYOLF.

(*To Audis.*)

You have drawn a veil over our eyes and led us into the land of mist.

TRYGVE.

The awful peaks tower above us and threaten us.

AUDIS.

We are all as veiled creatures; at times we see through the mist.

EYOLF.

You know where you are leading us?

AUDIS.

I could go in blindness.

TRYGVE.

As one asleep, without taking a wrong step?

AUDIS.

(*Walks toward the precipice, which is already dimmed by the mist.*)

As one awakened!

EYOLF.

I see! You would test our courage? Then let me go first! (*Eyolf holds Audis back and takes the lead himself.*)

TRYGVE.

No, no, you must not move! One step into the fleeting mist and we are lost!

AUDIS.

How beautiful it is to have no fear!

EYOLF.

(*Feeling of her hair as the mist thickens around them.*)

Audis, you are covered with mist. It is streaming from your hair and from your face. And your cheeks are wet with the mist of tears.

TRYGVE.

(*Feeling of her hands.*)

The dampness is creeping into your warm blood, chilling your very soul. Your hands are cold and damp, even your throbbing pulse cannot keep them warm.

AUDIS.

(*Evading both.*)

Do not touch me. My very soul is passing into mist. I am losing my very self, vanishing forever from myself, finding that which I love more than myself.

EYOLF.

(*Reaching out to her.*)

Do not draw your hands away from us!

AUDIS.

(*As one giving up the very last.*)

You cannot hold me by my hands. They must fade before you as the hands of mist. There are other ties, the intangible ties of the soul.

EYOLF.

(*Trying in vain to reach her.*)

To feel you pass beyond our reach is agony.

AUDIS.

(*With suppressed pain.*)

It is well such moments do not last, or the soul would break its bonds! If we were only free, free as we are in our dreams!

EYOLF.

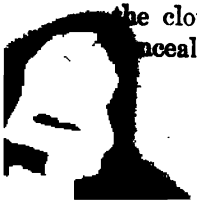
No one shall wake you from your beautiful dream!

TRYGVE.

If only you do not try to walk in blindness!

AUDIS.

I must go on! I dreamt that we should walk upon the clouds, that we should stand face to face without concealing the thought of our hearts.



TRYGVE.

You would put us to the utmost test?

EYOLF.

You would have us greater than we are?

AUDIS.

(*In anguish.*)

Say that I shall not lose all; because all is not possible. Give me some token of faith!

EYOLF.

(*Bending and picking some yellow violets and giving them to Audis.*)

Here are some yellow violets, those that are a token of happiness!

TRYGVE.

(*Also picking a handful, and giving them to Audis.*)

You shall also have a gift from me.

AUDIS.

(*Entranced.*)

And I will fill my hands for both of you!

(*She takes a few steps forward and puts one foot over the precipice. The men draw her back just as she is losing her balance. They stand speechless with fear, realizing the danger they have escaped.*)

AUDIS.

So near the abyss! How beautiful to die! What was it that saved me? (*Eyolf and Trygve are still holding her hands.*) Yes, it was these hands that saved me. If I should take a wrong step they would not fail me. My heart knows it. It has come to pass as it happened in my dream!

EYOLF.

Audis, we love you!

TRYGVE.

It is well the mist covers us.

AUDIS.

For it was given me to love you both. What is it I am saying? The truth has broken from my lips! Would that the mist could hide me from your sight!

TRYGVE.

A power greater than ourselves has shaped this end.

EYOLF.

How long will it keep us spellbound?

TRYGVE.

What mercy does it dispense?

AUDIS.

We need no mercy! We know love's greatness! Farewell, Eyolf! Farewell, Trygve! From henceforth will I pray that this moment may be an inkling of the eternity to come, that I may always feel your invisible hands! (*Audis disappears in the mist.*)

EYOLF.

Audis, where are you? Beware of the precipice! Reach out your hands to us, that we may hold you by the very thread of life!

TRYGVE.

She is gone, gone, floated away, as the mist that does not bear our touch!

EYOLF.

Then, by my life, will I find her!

TRYGVE.

You love her more than your life?

EYOLF.

And you, Trygve? What right have you to love her more than your life? It is well I cannot see your fiery eyes, or I would long to quench your flame!

TRYGVE.

Then would I prove the right of the stronger!

(The men grasp each other as if to wrestle. Suddenly, a shot is heard, followed by a shriek. The fiddler is seen fleeing down the mountain, followed by the Stranger in close pursuit. The men grow calm. Ravna comes into view, wringing her hands.)

RAVNA.

(Shrieks.)

The Stranger has shot him!

(The mist encloses her and all are lost to sight. A great rumbling is heard in the mountains.)

CURTAIN.

ACT II

2

ACT II.

Place: *Reen's house.*

Time: *Early the next morning.*

Scene: *Rebecca's sitting room. The walls are white, and white curtains are drawn before the windows and the glass door which leads out to the veranda, on the right. To the left, a door leading into the garden. In the background, an open door leading into the house. Rebecca sits in a reclining chair, binding wreaths. She is robed in black and looks very pale and worn. Her features are finely drawn; her eyes those of a visionary; around her mouth are lines of bitterness and resignation. Her movements are strangely listless and powerless.*

REBECCA.

(*Rising and going to the window, drawing the curtains slightly aside.*)

Why does she not come? The trees stand like ghosts. How penetrating the light! (*Rebecca shudders and draws the curtains back.*) What shall I do? She's been upon the mountain with them both. She must be led to choose; and yet I dare not bid her do as I have done. (*Rebecca looks at herself in a mirror.*) How awful I have grown to look! How cruel is the love that delves its way into the heart and grows in secret like some poisonous weed. Love that makes one shudder with

longings that never die. (*Steps are heard approaching. Audis enters from the back door. She is humming the tune which is heard from without. Her hair is blown loosely about; her eyes burn strangely; her scarf is torn.*)

REBECCA.

(*To Audis.*)

You've been out all night?

AUDIS.

(*Radiantly.*)

I've felt the little bird sing in my heart!

REBECCA.

You've loved, I can see it in your eyes!

AUDIS.

I have found something so beautiful that I dare not touch it for fear of spoiling it.

REBECCA.

(*Horrified.*)

You've sinned?

AUDIS.

I am happy, happy! I am awakened! I long to move in the dance of the living! (*She dances.*)

REBECCA.

Do not dance!

AUDIS.

(*At the window.*)

Trees that rise to the skies,
Touching the sun and the dew,
What is it that runs through your fibrous stems,
Making you glad?
Trees that span the wide heavens!
Come, birds from the south and the west!
What do they say of the story of men?
Birds of the skies, how I wish I were you!

REBECCA.

(*With increasing fear.*)

Do not sing! I hear the same strain I heard when he died!

AUDIS.

(*Pulling the curtains aside and letting the blue light of morning fill the room.*)

Sounds can man make, and forms, but never a dawn!
How wise is man to ponder and creep and fawn!

If I were that little bird on the branch,
With the innate reason to be,
I'd shake and warble all day in the tree,
Ti-ri-li——ti-ri-li——li! (*Audis dances.*)

REBECCA.

He is playing you out of yourself. He is out there! He comes to accuse me! (*A shriek is heard from without. Rebecca falls back in her reclining chair, in an unconscious state.*)

AUDIS.

(*Opening the door to the veranda.*)

Thorild! You are wounded? Come in! (*Thorild enters from the veranda. His clothes are spotted with blood.*) You are shot? (*Thorild points to his breast.*) Let me see! (*Thorild takes a little bird from his breast and gives it to Audis.*) A little bird you've carried on your breast? It is hurt? (*Thorild nods and starts to go, Audis stops him.*) No——no——go to my father's room. Stay there till I come. (*Audis points to her mother. Thorild nods gratefully and hastens out through the door leading into the house. Audis fondles the little bird.*) It must not die. I will keep it warm. I will lay it here. (*She makes a place for it on her breast by crossing her scarf and wrapping it so that the bird cannot be seen. Then she bends over her mother.*) Why does she fear his music? Fear has clogged her blood; day by day it has settled upon her heart. (*Feels*

of her hands.) How cold she is! She is the snow of the peaks; the cold light of dawn; the shroud that wraps itself around the early shoots in spring. She has less color and less warmth than I. The life-strength is faint in her. She has never dwelt in the sun.

REBECCA.

(*Sitting up and opening her eyes wide.*)

What ails you?

AUDIS.

(*With her hands on her breast.*)

We must out in the open. We cannot breathe within these walls. The odor of pressed flowers stifles us.

REBECCA.

(*Pleading.*)

Do not go out to him!

AUDIS.

(*As though speaking to the little bird.*)

To the trees that shiver with joy; to the wind that goes far and wide, and fills the earth's silence; to the birds that soar!

REBECCA.

(*With increasing intensity.*)

You speak as your father spoke. It was a fearful blow!

AUDIS.

A sudden blow is not the worst; but to deny ourselves day by day! Can you not see, we sit dead and dull within our barracks awaiting the hour of death? We should live with a will against all hindrances. Out there are no tears——no sorrow!

REBECCA.

(*In despair.*)

If you leave me this day, I shall lose you as I lost him! Be merciful!

AUDIS.

I will stay; we will wait till we are strong enough to fly! (*Rebecca feels her way out, as one whose vision is clouded.*)

AUDIS.

(*Her hands on her breast.*)

Our hearts beat faster now! It is with longing——
(*The veranda door is thrown open, letting a burst of sunlight into the room. Eyolf enters.*)

EYOLF.

Audis! come out into the sun!

AUDIS.

(*Standing in the stream of sunshine from the open door.*)

Is not the light falling in luscious streaks upon the mountains?

EYOLF.

(*Exalted.*)

And the fjord mirrors the sky!

AUDIS.

And the squirrels leap from branch to branch!

EYOLF.

And the birds are waiting for you!

AUDIS.

(*Timidly.*)

Where is Trygve?

EYOLF.

(*As a cloud passes over his face.*)

Am I my brother's keeper? I have come to ask for that which is mine.

AUDIS.

That which is yours?

EYOLF.

Yes, mine, mine! All that could never be his!

AUDIS.

You want me to sin?

EYOLF.

I will teach you to forget by the sweetest of sins. I will crown you with a wreath of flowers, and keep it ever fresh! (*He picks up a wreath and places it on her head.*)

AUDIS.

(*Frightened.*)

You will make me the bride of death?

EYOLF.

Those who are loved do not die!

AUDIS.

(*Her hands on her breast.*)

I have a fear——!

EYOLF.

If you died, I would wrap you in a shroud of tenderness, and call you back by the very strength of my being!

AUDIS.

And it would live? No, no, I will not sin, even for love!

EYOLF.

One moment and you shall be mine! Once mine, there can be no sinning! I will toil for you, submit to your mandates, fulfill the secrets you whisper to my soul. In turn, you shall soothe me by your purity, temper me by your caprice; and I shall rise as a conqueror having tasted the sweets of life! Come, you shall sink into my heart, closer than you ever dreamt of coming to another. You shall dream my dream, never awaken, never doubt, never question!

AUDIS.

(*As though listening to music.*)

All which you say, I have dreamt! If there were no other——?

EYOLF.

I will take you to a land where there are no others; where all are strange and know not our tongue! Come! (*He draws Audis to his breast.*)

AUDIS.

(*Freeing herself.*)

Beware! One touch and it would die!

EYOLF.

Have you no human longings?

AUDIS.

You do not know what ache I have!

EYOLF.

(*Mockingly.*)

Do you love with a heart of marble?

AUDIS.

I love as the little bird loves!

EYOLF.

(*Taking her hands.*)

You are cold——

AUDIS.

(*Reproachfully.*)

You do not know that the little bird is dying——?

EYOLF.

(*With suppressed passion.*)

You do not know how I long to crush it almost to death——

AUDIS.

(*Listening to the melody which is heard from the room above.*)

Do you not hear the music? He is playing for the little bird, to make it sing, to give it strength! Yes, I feel it stir——it is not dead——

EYOLF.

(*Also hearing the music.*)

What strange mystery is yours? If you practice black arts, I will share them. I will sacrifice at your altar! I will give you my soul for daily bread!

AUDIS.

(*With inner realization.*)

Do you not feel the invisible hands of that other?

EYOLF.

No——I am sane to-day. The music does not deafen me, the mist does not blind me. I have come to free you from self-deception——to give you one life, one love, one victory!

(*Rebecca is heard to call "Audis" several times.*)

AUDIS.

You do not hear the sad voice of this house of sorrow? You do not see the ghost wandering about in the house of dead love?

EYOLF.

The ghost of dead love? (*Rebecca is seen to go past the open door wringing her hands.*)

AUDIS.

Think you not I have heard the vain words and caresses by which sad hearts try to cover up their aches when they have sinned together? Once bound, they have not the strength to tear themselves apart. Fear couples them; the fear of being alone. Never will I bind myself to one while there is yet room for another in my heart. My poor mother, she is ill with memories. I must go.

(*Audis hastens out of the hall door.*)

EYOLF.

(*To himself.*)

She is gone!—— What power has she to evade my touch? I felt as though I were trying to catch a little bird. I almost felt her flutter in my hand. She is still under the spell of her enchanted vision! She has gone too long upon the mountains with the light of the glistening snow in her eyes! One feels the power of the intangible in her presence! What is that strain I hear? Is it earthly music, or is it merely the echo of that which haunts me? What is it that chills me? Is it these white walls, or my evil premonitions? I feel as though a ghost had clung to me and covered me with icy kisses?

THE STRANGER.

(*Showing himself in the open veranda door.*)

Do you know if he is dying?

EYOLF.

Of whom do you speak?

THE STRANGER.

The one who came here before you.

EYOLF.

(*Motioning to the Stranger to go.*)

You grave digger, begone! There is no one here in haste to claim your services. (*The Stranger goes.*)

EYOLF.

(*To himself.*)

The one who came here before me? Trygve has been here before me! His are the hands that are chilling me! I will find him and settle with him, face to face! I will not play a game with ghosts! If only the little bird doesn't die in this whited sepulchre!

(*Eyolf shudders and goes out by the door he came.*)

REBECCA.

(*Enters, stands listening, points to the room above.*)

I thought I heard his step up there, where no one has set foot since he died. (*Puts her fingers in her ears.*) That awful tune! I hear it even through muf-

fled ears. It is the ghost singing to me. The dead can break the silence. There is no use stopping our ears.

AUDIS.

(*Entering, and seeing her mother's distress.*)

If some poor soul who had no other language tried to reach you through music, would you have the heart to violate the invisible chords that span the gulf between you and him?

(*Rebecca looks strangely at Audis and goes out silently.*)

AUDIS.

(*To herself.*)

Could we only take all the dead things out and fill the house with music, life and light! How cruel it is to shut out the sun! Yes, yes, we are suffering anguish! But soon——soon——we shall fly!

TRYGVE.

(*Entering from the garden door without knocking.*)

How strange you look!

AUDIS.

(*With her hands to her heart.*)

I felt something throb——so strangely!

TRYGVE.

You felt my coming? You felt the throb of my heart in your own?

AUDIS.

(*As if to herself.*)

So wonderful!—— It seemed to beat in unison with mine!

TRYGVE.

Ah! That is the mere inkling of love! Imagine one upon your breast, drawing the red flame from your heart!

AUDIS.

(*Beside herself with inward pain.*)

So does it burn——struggling to free itself.

TRYGVE.

(*Passionately.*)

Trembling with the great shaking sensation of new life!

AUDIS.

(*Evading him as he approaches her.*)

Fluttering between life and death——!

TRYGVE.

(*As one painting visions.*)

Filling you with stars; lifting you over the mountains——

AUDIS.

(*Also seeing visions.*)

Yes, yes, over the mountains——!

TRYGVE.

Fleeing away from that other into the wilds——opening the flood gates of joy——!

AUDIS.

I know how it would sing!

TRYGVE.

Sing in my very heart!

AUDIS.

No—no—it would break away from your heart.

TRYGVE.

You are still thinking of him?

AUDIS.

(*In despair.*)

I am dreaming——dreaming——! Trygve, you do not know what I have upon my heart?

TRYGVE.

We have stood on the borderland of the unknown. We have tried to fathom the unfathomable, to speak the inexpressible. We have felt the same blind longings, the same pitiable incompleteness. We have lied——lied against the warm blood, against the flame that is eating our hearts to the core!

AUDIS.

We must up again to the mountains! We cannot live down here.

TRYGVE.

Men do not go upon the mountains to live, but to die. As long as there is strength in these hands they shall draw you back to earth. I will make you my captive queen, and teach you love's humility. (*Trygve takes a wreath and places it on her head.*)

AUDIS

(*Tearing it off.*)

Why do you cover me with false flowers? These flowers are for the dead!

TRYGVE.

We do not die so easily.

AUDIS.

But the beautiful love dies that has only one life!

TRYGVE.

(*Bitterly.*)

You say that love is dead which was to prove that love can never die?

AUDIS.

(*With inward pain.*)

I do not know——I dare not think——I dare not feel——but I would give my life to save the little bird——!

TRYGVE.

Then come into the sun! (*He flings the door open to the veranda.*)

AUDIS.

(*Her hand over her eyes.*)

We cannot bear the light just now——

TRYGVE.

You're ill with love?

AUDIS.

Its wings are closed; I fear 'twill die!

TRYGVE.

Hah—hah!— You'll see how it will fly, if you but let it free! (*Trygve goes out disdainfully.*)

AUDIS.

(*To herself.*)

To go with this thing half alive, half dead, upon my breast? And this thing in my heart? I will get a mark on my brow like those who go with a hungry love eating their hearts to the core!

REBECCA.

(*Enters, wringing her hands.*)

My child, my happiness!—— You have resigned?

AUDIS.

I've died a kind of death!

REBECCA.

There's no sin greater than a sinful love.

AUDIS.

(*With a far-away look.*)

I thought it was the bidding of Him who made the mountains and the music, that we should love——

REBECCA.

(*With horror.*)

Do not picture to me the visions of love, the music and the upliftings! One day you will fall to earth and lie bruised and bleeding——

AUDIS.

No——no—— not I—— but the little bird!

REBECCA.

(*Startled.*)

The little bird?

AUDIS.

(*With unutterable pain.*)

Yes, I must go and bury one thing beautiful!

CURTAIN.

ACT III

ACT III.

Time: Afternoon of the same day.

Place: The valley and Ole's house. The peasants stand outside and talk in hushed voices. Music and church bells are heard in the distance. The wind sighs softly in the trees, and a light mist hangs over the mountains.

SEVERAL.

(*Exclaiming.*)

Ole's money is stolen!
Who has robbed the dead?
There is nothing left for his burial.

HULDA.

When I came in the chest was open. The fiddler had been there before me.

ALL.

The fiddler must have taken it!

(*The two hunters appear singing. They are drunk and carry swords instead of rifles.*)

SEVERAL.

(*To the hunters.*)

Hush! Don't you know there lies one dead within!

FIRST HUNTER.

We just escaped with our lives.

SEVERAL.

Why do you carry swords? Are you going to serve the king?

FIRST HUNTER.

Our rifles were stolen——(hic). We fell asleep.

SEVERAL.

Where were your when you fell asleep?

FIRST HUNTER.

I was with Lise under the coverlet. (*Laughter.*)

SECOND HUNTER.

We were on the mountain. He had played sun and moon out of their course.

FIRST HUNTER.

We searched for our rifles and, instead, we found this knapsack! Here you shall see! (*Opens the sack and takes out the contents.*)

ALL.

A key! (*The key is passed around among the bystanders.*)

SEVERAL.

It is the key to Reen's house. It was lost the day Rudolf Reen died. The widow has searched for it.

SECOND HUNTER.

And this blood-spotted knife!

SEVERAL.

Rudolf Reen's knife! The fiddler has stolen that, too!

FIRST HUNTER.

And these are his fiddle strings!

SEVERAL.

There is a real silver string among them. That is surely the one he uses to play us out of our senses.

SECOND HUNTER.

(*Emptying the bag.*)

And what's that?

ALL.

A picture! The picture of Audis Reen! Then it is true! He loves her? We've heard him play in Reen's house this day! (*Ravna, as though overcome by the news, leans against the elder tree; moans and wrings her hands.*) Worse things are done within the walls of those fine houses than all we do in our wildness. All to Reen's house! It is time the widow opened her doors. The daughter shall answer for her sins. The pastor shall hold her to account. Ole's death shall be avenged this day! (*The peasants scatter with threats and exclamations.*)

FIRST HUNTER.

Let's go in and slake our thirst.

SECOND HUNTER.

And drink the dead man's toast. (*They go swaggering into the house.*)

RAVNA.

(*Beside herself.*)

She's taken him!

EYOLF.

(*Who has been standing in the background.*)

What is it you say?

RAVNA.

She is a pretty bird and sings to make him play!

EYOLF.

You speak of the fiddler? (*Ravna nods.*)
(*The hunters come stumbling out of the house, throwing their beer jugs away from them.*)

FIRST HUNTER.

Did you see it moving over there by the chimney?

SECOND HUNTER.

I heard it gnawing at the coffin.

EYOLF.

(*Indignantly.*)

Did you get your fill?

FIRST HUNTER.

(*Singing.*)

Brown at the bottom, white at the top; I got enough to lighten the crop.

EYOLF.

(*To the Second Hunter.*)

Show me your swords!

SECOND HUNTER.

His blood shall flow! We'll tap his heart!

RAVNA.

(*Shrieking.*)

They'll kill him! Oh, spare him, God; he's innocent!

(*She goes wringing her hands.*)

EYOLF.

(*To the hunters.*)

You wretched beasts, give me your swords, or I will set the fiddler on your track!

BOTH.

(*Giving up their swords and trembling with fear.*)

Have mercy! We have just escaped——

EYOLF.

Pack off and keep your peace!

(*The hunters bow humbly and go singing, arm in arm.*)

EYOLF.

(*To himself, as he draws the swords from their scabbards.*)

What grand old weapons! If one could settle with love or settle with life! Make life a sport—form it, shape it, make holiday with the travail of our bondage! But we are slaves to nature's will; all our resistance fades before the great flame! There is a destiny!

TRYGVE.

(*Appears.*)

How like a young king you look!

EYOLF.

'Twas always you who played the king.

TRYGVE.

(*With irony.*)

And you my faithful earl!

EYOLF.

(*Bitterly.*)

Yes, yes, I played for you to win!

TRYGVE.

We never cease to play!

EYOLF.

But if one's play be false?

TRYGVE.

Does love ask whether it be true or false?

EYOLF.

You have the sportsman's lust, but not his honor?

TRYGVE.

Friendship is built on honor; love has no compunction. What honor does she ask, who has refined love's torture and by her woman's subtlety made us slaves against our will?

EYOLF.

You break the laws of honor and of trust as lightly as of love!

TRYGVE.

I'd break the laws from oldest time to have my way!

EYOLF.

Then let us play! Let's have the final jest!

TRYGVE.

(*Taking one of the swords offered him.*)

I'll be the king and you my faithless earl! The one who wins shall carry off the princess on a snow-white horse!

EYOLF.

(*With feigned amusement.*)

This sword is blunt; 'twill be a mockery!

(*They take position and begin to fence. Eyolf succeeds in knocking the sword out of Trygve's hand.*)

TRYGVE.

(*Enraged.*)

Your smile undoes me quite. You're gentle as a woman. No more in jest! Take care! (*They fence earnestly; Trygve is about to strike Eyolf, when Ravna appears as one crazed.*)

RAVNA.

(*To the men.*)

I've seen the blood spots on the window sill. He's been there every night. The key unto the house is worn with use. (*She sinks down on the bench and moans.*)

EYOLF.

(*To Ravna.*)

You speak about the fiddler still?

TRYGVE.

There is a secret vault where she will bury him!

EYOLF.

Such rumors are afloat?

RAVNA.

She gave me hope; she's felled me to the ground.

EYOLF.

She mixes truth and fantasy!

TRYGVE.

Here is some mystery!

EYOLF.

I'd rather see her dead than lose her, living!

TRYGVE.

And better yours, than in a cripple's arms!

EYOLF.

(*To Ravna.*)

We will return the fiddler to your arms this very day!

TRYGVE.

We will deliver him from passion's sway!
(*Eyolf and Trygve hasten away.*)

RAVNA.

(*Feeling about the trunk of the elder tree.*)

Round, around, into a mesh, run the threads, the wishing threads! When one breaks off, a soul must die! Here did she cut me off——right here! Her thread goes on; her wish comes true! Could I but find a rope, a long, strong rope to bear my wish! I'd bind a knot for him and me! (*She goes searching for a rope and is heard to sing:*)

They called it sin, the sin of a day,
  Sin bowed me down;
Evil eyes I met, evil eyes were they,
  That felled me to the ground!

(*As she disappears, the Pastor appears dressed in the black surplice gown ordained by the church. He has a shrewd, worldly face, with traces of religious fanaticism, and a sanctimonious, rather self-satisfied air.*)

THE PASTOR.

(*To himself.*)

Where are the peasants? Why have they not gathered here for the service? How great is my task! The curse of superstition rests upon them all. Miserable souls that cry for new miracles! Already they have turned from me to welcome a stranger who talks

to them in parables. Yet, when he came and asked to dig the graves, he would not make avowal of his faith. (*The pastor stands pondering.*) His face haunts me!—— If it should be—— (*The pastor wipes the perspiration from his brow.*)

REBECCA.

(*Appears, greatly alarmed.*)

Who is that stranger, Pastor?

THE PASTOR.

I do not know for certain, Rebecca. But I have a suspicion. You remember my brother? (*Rebecca nods.*) When he disappeared people thought it was to escape from a wild woman's love!

REBECCA.

Yes, poor Ravna!

THE PASTOR.

It was not she, but I who drove him away. I feared him; for, with all his failings, he was my superior. He was a gifted preacher and had a hold upon the peasants that I could never get. I have longed to call him back. If it should be——?

REBECCA.

All day he has stood outside our house and watched. Some say that he suspects the fiddler——

THE PASTOR.

Have you not heard the rumors?

REBECCA.

(*With anguish.*)

Since Rudolf's death, the fiddler has been unjustly blamed for all that has happened in the village.

THE PASTOR.

(*Astonished.*)

Is it possible that you would plead his cause, Rebecca?

REBECCA.

Yes, Pastor! I can no longer dwell alone with the gruesome secret. I know him to be innocent. I had not the strength to confess at the time; I feared that Rudolf would not get a holy burial. Read this——his last words! (*Rebecca gives the Pastor a letter which he reads in silence.*)

THE PASTOR.

That scamp! He's never said a word in his defence.

REBECCA.

To save my child from knowing!

THE PASTOR.

This proves to me what I have feared! He loves her and she is under his thraldom!

REBECCA.

(*In despair.*)

No—no— Pastor—— do not say——!

THE PASTOR.

You, yourself, Rebecca, have felt that strange drawing to another?

REBECCA.

(*Falteringly.*)

I did not understand until it was too late. They brought him home, and I was left to seek forgiveness from the dead!

THE PASTOR.

Evil spirits have filled your house; you have seen ghosts come and go!

REBECCA.

I have had no peace! I can no longer dwell under the great shadow. I must confess to all! I must be free!

THE PASTOR.

Not a word of this to the peasants, Rebecca. We must keep the truth concealed from them, which they cannot understand; or they will grow to doubt us who should lead them on the righteous path. Too long have they kicked their heels to his impish tunes. It is time he was caught and punished.

REBECCA.

Be merciful! Consider the wrong he has borne!

THE PASTOR.

Have an eye to your daughter, Rebecca. If it isn't already too late! (*The Pastor goes.*)

REBECCA.

(*To herself.*)

Could it be?—— Has he counted on his reward? No—no——no—no——! I thought I heard him play-

ing this morning; Audis said it was the wind singing in the trees! The peasants suspect her! There is a thraldom in his music! They are shouting! They have found him! They will kill him! (*Rebecca stands horrified as she sees the fiddler rushing by followed by the peasants in close pursuit.*)

AUDIS.

(*Appears; cries to her mother.*)

They accuse him of having murdered my father. He does not deny it.

REBECCA.

I know that he is innocent.

AUDIS.

You know it? You can save him?

REBECCA.

I dare not!

AUDIS.

(*As Thorild is seen dodging the blows of the peasants.*)

The blood is dripping from his cheek.

REBECCA.

(*With remorse.*)

It drips in my heart.

AUDIS.

(*As the noise and confusion subside.*)

He has escaped! Now you must speak!

REBECCA.

(*Looking reproachfully at Audis.*)

People say what I dare not repeat.

AUDIS.

(*Silencing her mother.*)

The babble that men make sounds to me as though I were listening outside of closed doors, where many speak at once. Why has he borne this false accusation?

REBECCA.

(*In anguish.*)

For love of you——to spare you!

AUDIS.

(*Suddenly transformed.*)

For love of me?

REBECCA.

(*As the peasants appear.*)

Come away! Do not let the peasants see you. They will mock us.

AUDIS.

The purest things we feel are spoiled by the judgment of men.

REBECCA.

(*Greatly disturbed as the peasants gather around.*)

They look at us with evil eyes.

AUDIS.

I will speak to them; I will proclaim his innocence!

REBECCA.

No—no! Wait! I will call the Pastor! (*Rebecca hastens away. The peasants throng closely around Audis, murmuring threats and accusations.*)

SEVERAL.

You have had the fiddler in your house! He who killed your father! You have helped him escape from justice! You do not even mourn your father's death! Speak, speak! Why don't you speak?

AUDIS.

(*Mounts the bench in order to avoid contact with the peasants, who are curious to look into her face.*)

Did I not mourn my father's death? You saw me follow him to the grave? I watched over him through the long, dark winter.

SEVERAL.

Before the year was out, you danced!

AUDIS.

Is it only a year? Yes, yes, I remember! The darkness lay as a heavy hand upon my heart. The firs had no solace, topping each other against the gray sky. The fjord was bound with ice, the rills and brooks hemmed in, the trees breathless!

SEVERAL.

And then——and then——what did you do?

AUDIS.

Everything was so still I almost ceased to sorrow. The trees were clad in crystals; they seemed to sing a chant of the mysterious; of those that are no more; of those that are to come; of the passing of eternity!

SEVERAL.

And you forgot your father?

AUDIS.

I wandered noiselessly through the forest and longed to touch the wild things. Then, all at once, I heard a strain, as though the ice-bound land were breaking the bonds of death, arising out of the grave, to the feast of the living! (*Music is heard from the mountains.*)

ALL.

(*Excitedly.*)

It was the fiddler who played!

AUDIS.

Now, first, do I understand what he played!

ALL.

He murdered your father; then he played you out of yourself.

AUDIS.

He is innocent; my mother will prove it!

ALL.

We have proofs of his guilt! See this knife, this string, this key, this picture! (*Showing the articles to Audis.*) Your picture!

AUDIS.

(*With inner realization.*)

Now do I see it all so clearly. Now do I know what gift he has. You have not valued aright the worthy guest who dwelt among you. You feared him because he played you up the mountain. You are the half awake, the partly living, the crippled beings! You go about in your daily habits as though they were shrouds that should follow you into the grave!

ALL.

(*With threats.*)

How dare you mock our lowly station?

AUDIS.

How dare I tell you what I see? Black are your hearts with prejudice and wild your souls with fear and hate. The beautiful bloom of the hills is downtrodden by the flocks that come to graze and are frightened by

their own shadow. The song birds are shot by the hunters when they fly too high for the bird tamers. The melody of peace is broken by the shriek of ghosts, the ghosts of your evil conscience. A soul clear as crystal, reflecting the colors of the sun, is splashed over with blood!

SEVERAL.

(*Among themselves.*)

She is dreaming——dreaming! She is under his thraldom!

AUDIS.

Am I dreaming? Don't you know that dreams are real? We are bound to them by a myriad of unseen tendrils from nature's secret being. Have you not heard the dreams calling to you from the woods and the mountains and the falling waters? (*The peasants draw back alarmed.*)

SEVERAL.

She is under his spell!

Call the Pastor, he alone can free her from his thraldom!

God have pity upon her! She's so young!

(*The peasants disperse. Audis steps down from the bench.*)

AUDIS.

(*To herself.*)

Now is he saved! He has reached the beautiful temple of peace, where they dare not follow him!

(*Eyolf and Trygve, who have been standing in the background, step forth.*)

EYOLF.

(*To Audis.*)

You think but of him?

TRYGVE.

Have you forgotten us?

AUDIS.

(*Bewildered by her own feelings.*)

Until this day, until this moment——

EYOLF.

You loved us?

AUDIS.

I see his wild eyes and bleeding cheek. He has sacrificed his life to spare me! I must go——I must find him!

EYOLF.

You shall not go! You are beside yourself!

TRYGVE.

You are under the sway of his enchantment!

AUDIS.

(*Mysteriously.*)

You do not understand; he has given me a little bird!

EYOLF.

Was it his little bird that sang in you when you stood up there painting the visions beautiful?

TRYGVE.

Have you forgotten? We saved you from the abyss!

AUDIS.

(*To herself.*)

It did not want to die!

EYOLF.

And we do not want the beautiful young love to die! We will gather all the threads you've spun, and wear the cloak of fantasy. We will love you above and beyond the bargaining! We will abstain from all, except the intangible stuff of your dreams!

TRYGVE.

We will bow to you as the first, sweet love that teaches us beauty and sorrow; and never question the mystery by which our souls are bound.

AUDIS.

You have changed?

EYOLF.

The fires of your soul have forged us into men!

AUDIS.

Then it is true, there are no walls in love's mansion?

EYOLF.

We are not ourselves, but the long ages of love, pulsing in our poor, imprisoned hearts, in our poor, walled bodies!

TRYGVE.

You have taught us the tenderness they feel who discover that life is a blind, unreasoning mistress!

AUDIS.

What tenderness have you for him who is wounded in the breast?

EYOLF.

(*Approaching Audis.*)

You have seen his bare breast?

AUDIS.

(*Evading him.*)

His very soul!

EYOLF.

You are his little bird?

AUDIS.

And they will kill me soon!

EYOLF.

(*To Trygve.*)

She loves!

TRYGVE.

He's won!

AUDIS.

Oh, let me go to him; I only want to give him back the little bird! If only some one does not shoot me in the breast!

EYOLF.

Fear not! We will guard your path.

TRYGVE.

We will clear the way to love's temple!
(*Eyolf and Trygve make signs to each other and go.*)

AUDIS.

(*To herself.*)

They will clear the way to love's temple! Love is victorious! I go to crown his death with sweetest victory!

REBECCA.

(*Appears, looking with horror at Audis.*)

You go to him?

AUDIS.

He shall sleep in my arms!

REBECCA.

(*With increasing anguish.*)

Do you know what you have done? You have had him in our house this day! You have taken him from her!

AUDIS.

From whom?

REBECCA.

From Ravna! You filled her with false hopes and wishes; when she heard that you had taken him——

AUDIS.

Ravna loved Thorild?

REBECCA.

He alone could have saved her! Now she is dead!

AUDIS.

Dead?

REBECCA.

Dead for the love of him!

AUDIS.

(*Her hands folded rigidly.*)

I had built a bridge of dreams; it should lead to heaven.

REBECCA.

It has led to the jaws of death!

AUDIS.

The bridge is breaking——breaking!

REBECCA.

Your sin is mighty.

AUDIS.

(*Rambling.*)

Do not judge me, mother. You have sat within the white walls and had God with you! I have wandered so far and so high! I am dizzy!

(*She sinks to her knees, her head upon the bench.*)

REBECCA.

There is only One who can save you!

AUDIS.

I long to see Him, to hear Him, to touch Him who is merciful!

REBECCA.

(*Gratefully.*)

He has heard my prayers; His will be done! I go to confess, to make peace, to pay the penalty! (*Rebecca goes with bended head as one praying in silence.*)

AUDIS.

(*To herself.*)

It is all black. Now must I bury you, little bird! Deep in the earth where you cannot feel the sun. Then let them pile the heavy stones upon us; we have borne something upon our hearts which is heavier than stone.

Oh, love, let me touch thy eyes and lips,
I am blind, blind, blind!
Touch my soul with a soothing kiss,
I am walled and know not what I seek!
It is dark where death doth come!

(*Audis fumbles about. Music is heard from the mountains.*)

A VOICE FROM THE WOODS.

Come, little bird! You shall hear what the mountains say with their hoods of ice like blue goblins in the snow!

AUDIS.

(*To herself.*)

The mountains are calling me!

THE VOICE.

Come, you shall hear what the waters say that spring through rocks!

AUDIS.

Do you not know we belong to the grave!

THE VOICE.

The little bird is not dead; it will sing up there!

AUDIS.

Tell me more of the life that knows no pain!

THE VOICE.

The little bird must be free!

AUDIS.

(*Enchanted.*)

Thorild! He lives! I hear his song! I go! I come!

(*Audis goes toward the mountains. The mist thickens in the valley. The peasants appear in confusion, chasing Hulda.*)

SEVERAL.

(*To Hulda.*)

Go—go your way! We want no more of your ugly prophecies! 'Tis she has brewed the mischief for us all! We've seen her on the graveyard late at night. She's tried to tempt the fiddler with a crust of bread. She's loved him secretly, that ugly hag!

HULDA.

(*Pleading.*)

Why did he come and stir me up? I starved myself

to give him bread; but when he learned it was my hand that fed him, he would have none of me!

AN OLD PEASANT.

Rebecca Reen has proved the fiddler innocent. She spoke with terror in her voice. She spoke to make us think. Woe to him who has shot the fiddler and sent him to the mountain top to die!

THE STRANGER.

I am he! I came to find her! I saw his power displayed. I saw her shadow in the mist. I rushed upon him on the very precipice! But he escaped from out my clutch! I followed him from rock to rock! We leapt for life or death! I shot and struck him in the breast!

ALL.

Who are you?

THE STRANGER.

I am one that sinned in my youth. (*He removes his hat.*)

ALL.

You are the Pastor's brother!

THE STRANGER.

I have lost her! (*A procession appears. Several carry a stretcher on which Ravna lies wrapped in a white sheet. They go into the house singing.*)

In Ola valley, by Ola tarn,
There Ravna's laddie is lost and gone;
They rang in the valley, they chimed in the glen;
But never she found her laddie again!

(*The church bells are heard faintly in the distance. A strange white light is suddenly seen to fall from the mountain and pierce the mist.*)

ALL.

(*Kneeling.*)

A miracle! The light of God!

THE STRANGER.

We are the children of darkness, imprisoned so as to be liberated, mystified so as to be revealed. Does not the light of the invisible penetrate the very depths of our being? Does it not force itself beyond our heavy eyelids? Come with me upon the mountains, and all things shall be made clear to you!

(*The Stranger and the peasants are seen groping their way through the mist to the mountains. The mist gradually thickens about them and they are lost to sight. The music of the invisible grows more powerful. After a few moments, the mountain peaks come to view. Audis is seen approaching the place where Thorild lies dying.*)

AUDIS.

Thorild, I have come!

THORILD.

My hands are torn.

AUDIS.

They are beautiful as red roses in the snow.

THORILD.

My strength is broken.

AUDIS.

So is the wind that strikes the cliffs.

THORILD.

How did you come?

AUDIS.

A sweet music led me.

THORILD.

Others have been drawn by that silent music.

AUDIS.

My poor father, tell me his secret.

THORILD.

She poisoned his soul and that of another.

AUDIS.

My mother loved another!

THORILD.

(*Nodding.*)

They wrestled on the mountain; and your father was the stronger.

AUDIS.

My father followed him!

THORILD.

(*Nodding.*)

I heard him pray that when he awakened all the horror would be a dream, and his dream of life be true!

AUDIS.

Do you think he has awakened!

THORILD.

I saw him radiant!

AUDIS.

Thorild, I go with you. You've saved me from a sinful love!

THORILD.

Have you no fear? I am deformed.

AUDIS.

My soul is filled with you. All I have thought and felt is yours. You are the music in my life.

THORILD.

Then come, I go! (*He dies.*)

AUDIS.

(*Rising.*)

I hear the music and it bears us up! We touch the clouds, for we are passing o'er the bridge! The heavens open to receive us both! (*She reaches out to one invisible.*) I feel your hands, and I am filled with mist! (*She sinks down upon Thorild. A little bird is seen to fly from her bosom. It soars upward and sings. Eyolf and Trygve appear.*)

EYOLF.

(*Bending over her.*)

We come too late; he's taken her! He was the big, black bird that called her home!

TRYGVE.

She was a bird that flapped her wings against the invisible walls of life's dwelling!

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